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ABSTRACT

Procedures for establishing a parent preschool cooperative are described. Part I describes the procedures. Initial needs are information, a place for action, members, housing, staff and equipment. Design of Meeting 1 includes setting a time, date and place of meetings and arranging publicity. At the meeting, discuss purposes, advantages and responsibilities of a cooperative school. Sign up interested people, decide on a temporary working committee, and set up Meeting 2. Before this meeting, study provincial regulations. At the meeting, review advantages and responsibilities of cooperatives and enlist volunteers. Form committees to report at next meeting on housing, staff, by-laws, etc. At meeting 3, decide on date of registration and fee payment after committee reports. Decide on possible opening dates. At meeting 4, elect officers, discuss plans for orientation of parents and set date and place for regular parent meetings. Part II explores important considerations for good operation, including legislation standards, the constitution, incorporating, finance, organization and continuity. (DJ)

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HOW TO START A PARENT COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

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Adapted from Cooperative Materials
by Jean Stevenson

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This booklet is provided for parents and educators
that they may prepare the child of today for
his role in the community of tomorrow.

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REFERENCE LIST

NOTE: Addresses of Councils are often subject to yearly changes. When writing for booklets, service materials lists, order forms, etc., check your PCPI Directory for the current address.

PARENT COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL
* PCPI Journal
* Learning Together
* Complete PCPI Guideline Packet (All the current PCPI Booklets)
* Publicity
* Teacher Hiring
* Orientation
* Safety in the Preschool
* PCPI Membership Information Packet (free)

MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF COOPERATIVE NURSERIES
* Offspring (a Twice-yearly educational magazine)
* A wide selection of looseleaf materials covering the philosophy of a cooperative, organization, administration, teaching program, equipment.

CALIFORNIA COUNCIL OF PARENT PARTICIPATION PRESCHOOLS
* Pointers for Participating Parents

VANCOUVER ASSOCIATION OF COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL GROUPS
* Portfolios for Teachers and Executives
* Publications Packet (Administration forms, contracts, childrens program, parents program, enrolment, participation, observation, etc.)

QUEBEC COUNCIL OF PARENT PARTICIPATION PRESCHOOLS
* A Guide to Cooperative Preschools
* Whiteside Taylor Centre for Cooperative Education (A history and description of this unique centre)
* Communique (QCPPP newsletter)

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL OF COOPERATIVE NURSERIES
* Handbook for Parents

HAMILTON AND DISTRICT COUNCIL OF COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOLS
* Starter Kit for Cooperative Preschools

PROJECT HEAD START
* Pamphlet No. 6, "Parents are Needed"

BOOKS
* Parents and Children Learn Together, Katharine Whiteside Taylor, Teachers College Press.
* Absorbed in Living, Children Learn, Anne Shaaker Schulman, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington, D.C.
* "Are You Going To Teach Today, Mommy?", Bucky Poppleton, 3024 Woodshore Court, Carmel, Indiana 46032

Part I..... First Steps

In the beginning you will need information and a plan for action, as well as members, housing, staff, and equipment.

1. INFORMATION

This is basic; you will have to be able to answer questions as well as sell an idea. Learn what a co-operative school is and decide whether it meets your needs. Read* about pre-school programs, nursery, kindergarten or day care. Contact local health authorities for rules on buildings and health requirements and also check the municipal by-laws. Contact your nearest co-op council** for an advisor to meet with you regularly for at least the initial six months organization. If there is no council near you, write to PCPI for information. Visit programs and observe practices, talk with teachers and local school authorities.

2. A PLAN FOR ACTION

Begin with some preliminary discussions with the small group of interested persons, to pool ideas and evaluate the possibilities of having a co-op program in the area. There should be general agreement on the kind of experience wanted for the children. This will lead more easily to a definition of your purposes when needed in a constitution for the organization.

These preliminary discussions should result in definite plans for the first larger meeting.

Meeting 1

Pre-Plan: Time, date and place of meeting.

Publicity - this is the beginning of a continuous job of soliciting members; talk it up; always give the name and telephone number of the person to contact; emphasize the invitation to fathers, as their support is essential.

Arrange for chairing and recording of this and the next meeting.

Topics: Discuss the nature and purpose of a co-operative school, its advantages and responsibilities.

* see attached reference list
** see attached list of Councils

Discuss a good program for the school, nursery, kindergarten or day care.

Sign up interested people and explain that this is not equal to a commitment.

Decide on a temporary working committee, e.g. chairman or coordinator and registrar.

Set date, time and place for next meeting.

Meeting 2

Pre-Plan: Study provincial or state health regulations and prepare a report on premises available, maximum number of children to be enrolled, equipment needs, also staff possibilities.

Publicity: Call each family listed, advertise time and place of meeting.

Welcoming committee, name tags, refreshments.

Topics: Review nature, advantages and responsibilities of a co-operative school (read recorder's report from first meeting)

Inform group of work done to date.

Discuss work to be done and enlist volunteers.

Keep, and add to, an "inactive list" of interested families, who have not attended meetings or whose children are too young.

Decide on a name, number of pupils, sessions, time and place of next meeting.

Form committees to report at the next meeting on housing, staff, rules (by-laws), telephoning, insurance, membership, equipment, etc.*

Meeting 3

Pre-Plan: Committees should find out what is needed, where and how to obtain it. (Possibly each Committee could meet with a Council advisor for discussion, use Council files and material and visit other schools and programs)

* see part II, Organization, page 11 of this booklet.

Meeting of all Committee persons to pool information.

Topics: Reports of committees and discussion; if discussion needs to be limited to keep the meeting in hand try (a) a vote, if all information is in (b) referral to committee for more study or (c) a request for written suggestions to be given to the proper committee.

Decide payment of a registration fee by a certain date, to determine the membership.

Possible date for opening, with deadlines for housing and selection of staff. As soon as a decision has been reached regarding staff, these persons should be included in all discussions. Their role as advisors to and facilitators of the program is crucial to a good operation.

Time and place of next meeting.

Meeting 4

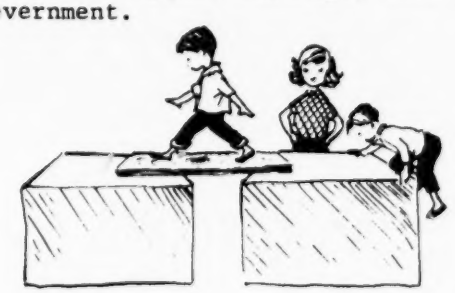
Pre-Plan: Committee reports.
Line up a suggested course of action or alternatives.

Topics: Election of officers.

Approval of committee reports.

Discuss plans for orientation of parents (Parents' program, mothers' duties, parent-teacher interviews, etc.) Staff should definitely take part in this planning.

Set date and place for regular meetings; this is essential for true co-operative government.



(Part I has been adapted from "Guidepost" No. 6, by the Michigan Council of Co-operative Nurseries).

Part II

Important considerations for good operation

Legislation and standards

Depending on the location of your school you may or may not have to consider the following:

BUSINESS LICENCE: You may be required to pay the fee for a licence necessary to operate your program as a business. This does not certify the school as to its premises or its educational standards.

LICENCE TO OPERATE A NURSERY SCHOOL, KINDERGARTEN OR DAY CARE PROGRAM: There are wide variations in the enforcement of legislation regarding childhood programs. Information should be obtained from state or provincial, and municipal authorities regarding the laws governing your area. Try the offices of health, education and welfare services, if you have no Cooperative Council in your vicinity.

If there are no legislated standards for preschools in your area, obtain information from other areas and formulate your own working standards for:

(a) EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The content of preschool programs varies with the philosophy and focus of the particular group. Consider the current literature in the field and the needs of your group, relating these to the broad picture of education in your community (see references). Consult local preschool associations and evaluate your plans in the light of any existing regulations or recommendations for early childhood care and education programs.

(b) HEALTH

Contact local officials concerning building regulations, communicable diseases, immunization of children and T.B. X-ray requirements for adults.

(c) FIRE SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Contact the local fire station and civil defense services.

REMEMBER:

The Chairman of the group is equivalent to a principal for the purpose of such regulations and is responsible for the meeting of the requirements. As for any responsibility which may lie with the registrar, the teacher, the equipment officer or the parents, each should be so advised by the Chairman of the school.

For example:

THE REGISTRAR SHOULD:

- see that the child's form is completed;
- ask for a medical examination for the child, prior to starting school, and for regular T.B. X-rays for participating mothers, as required;
- remind mothers that children need a "booster shot" at three years of age, particularly for tetanus;
- suggest polio and measles shots as wise preventive measures.

THE TEACHER SHOULD:

- be allowed to isolate or send home a child suspected of being ill, or having an unknown rash;
- inform the teacher-liaison officer when there are communicable diseases in a family;
- invite the public health nurse to visit, see the children and talk to them; co-operative school experiences with them can be most pleasant and the children enjoy meeting this community worker;
- hold fire drill from time to time and make sure that the children, staff, and assisting parents understand the procedures to follow;

THE EQUIPMENT OFFICER SHOULD:

- be sure that a suitable supply of first aid equipment is on hand and check it from time to time
- check the rooms and large equipment to ensure that they are clean and in good repair, check janitor service, stair lighting, bathroom care, etc.
- check fire extinguishers on premises to make sure they are tested regularly and that the staff knows how to use them

THE PARENTS SHOULD:

- send a note when the child has been absent, stating reason;
- if they, as assistants, or their children have any sign of cold, fever, stomach upset or unusual pain, or an unknown rash, they should inform the mothers' duty officer and remain at home.

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The constitution

Why have one?

For protection ... it puts into print what the school is and what it does.

For continuity ... because the members of co-operative groups change so much from year to year it helps to maintain a constant purpose, yet employs the best methods learned through experience as the school grows.

Who makes it?

The constitution should be drawn up preferably by the initiating group, before the end of the first year's operation. It should be reviewed regularly, to keep it practical and to ensure that it is understood by the members of the group.

What is it?

As the written record for the operation of a school, the constitution requires:

1. The purpose: The fundamental facts or principles, the reason for being. Because it is basic, this part of the constitution is least likely to change over the years.
2. The by-laws: The regulations by which these principles are carried out. Since these are specific to each group, they should meet the needs of the individual school and be more easily changed from .

Generally speaking, constitutions contain some or all of the following:

1. Name and purpose; ways to amend these.
2. By-laws concerning:
   - the Executive, its powers, Officers and their duties (chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, treasurer and possibly enrolment officer)
   - the Advisory Board
   - committees for supplies, equipment, maintenance and housekeeping, parents' duties (assisting teacher), telephone, parents' program, social, publicity, field trips, parents' library, teacher hiring, nominating, ways and means (fund raising), etc.
   - methods of amending these by-laws.

Incorporation

The purpose of incorporation is to relieve the parents of personal responsibility should the school get into financial difficulties. It also allows the group to enter into legal contracts. It requires legal advice and a detailed constitution. However, it is recommended that each executive should give it serious consideration. Unless a school is incorporated its contracts are not legally binding. Small groups may find it easier to have parents sign mutual agreements absolving liability, but a good insurance* program should be undertaken in any case.

Finance

Sound basic financial attitudes are essential to good co-operative preschool administration. This means being business-like, keeping a permanent set of books based on simple, consistent bookkeeping methods and formulating a budget.

A sound budget is the key to success. It is determined by estimating the total expenses for the year and comparing them with the total income for the year. However, there should be a contingency allowance of up to 10% of the total budget. For example, with an annual income of $3000 a school should allow $300 over and above the expected expenses, to take care of unexpected enrollment drop, replacement of a major piece of equipment, or substitute staff. The budget, to a large degree, should determine tuition rates. If tuition rates cannot be raised, then lower allocations would have to be made to the various areas of expenses. Any expense that occurs regularly should be included in the budget and the miscellaneous account should be kept small. The budget ought to be based on tuition and registration fees, not on fund raising activities.

One of the primary purposes of a budget should be to serve as a guide for the growth and improvement of the school. It should allow for the planned acquisition of equipment. Don't say "IF we have any money left over, we'll spend it on equipment". This is wrong. Allow funds regularly to improve your capital assets. Remember also, to allow for salary increases. Short-range planning frequently overlooks the fact that it is only fair and reasonable to give a teacher of one or more years' faithful service an annual increase. Whenever a group of parents is lucky enough to belong to a school during a low salary year, it should be willing to contribute to the school on a long range basis with the over-all aim of providing the best possible staff each year.

* see PCPI Membership insurance program.

It is recommended that a co-operative school maintain an operating reserve of 1½ times the average monthly income. For example if a school has an income of $400 a month, about $600 should be kept on hand with which to pay bills and keep "in the black" while the tuition fees are coming in. If sufficient cash is not passed on from one year to the next, an easy way to get this reserve is to ask for both the September and May tuition fees at the beginning of the year.

The average co-operative school finances can be expressed as:

Sources of funds	Uses of funds
fees	salaries
money-making projects	rent
accumulated reserve	equipment and supplies
	insurance
	miscellaneous expenses
	contingency allowance

Sources of funds

a. FEES:

Membership and registration fee: Paid at the time of registration, per child or family, usually annually. It could be refundable if withdrawal is made at least one month prior to opening. Its purpose is to signify the good faith of the registrants and to provide a source of income, especially for initial capital expenses.

Monthly fee (Tuition): is based on the cost of operation. It may fluctuate if the enrolment is incomplete, (i.e. no waiting list to fill vacancies). It is usually payable on the first of each month.

Sustaining fee: A nominal amount for persons wishing to be associate members although they may have no child in the program at the time. It pays for the privilege of notices of meetings and activities of the group but carries no voting power as a rule. It is a good way to keep the interest of parents not yet enrolled as well as past members of the group.

b. MONEY-RAISING PROJECTS:

Projects are sometimes undertaken to keep fees at a reasonable level, to provide an emergency fund or to provide capital for a special purpose, such as a building, outdoor equipment, etc. Income from this source should never be counted on to cover basic expenses such as salaries, rent or supplies.

c. ACCUMULATED RESERVE:

Long-range planning should enable each parent group to pass on to a succeeding group an accumulated reserve, to facilitate starting the school again next season and to provide for emergencies such as lower enrolment, higher salaries or new equipment. There is no limit to the amount that can be accumulated for capital improvement but, unless there is some definite project in mind, an excessive amount is unnecessary. Instead, fees could be reduced, or a plan made for subsidizing a family needing the service.

Uses of funds

a. SALARIES

The desire to operate as economically as possible has sometimes led to underpayment of qualified teachers, a trend which is to the detriment of the co-operative reputation. Similarly, when a group accepts the services of an unqualified teacher but pays her on a par with qualified teachers holding the same type of position, it is natural for professional irritations to result.

Consult local professional preschool associations or school systems for salary guides and fringe benefits, such as sick leave, accident insurance vacation pay, course fees, etc.

Remember to declare teachers' salaries to the appropriate Income Tax Departments and use procedures laid down regarding unemployment insurance deductions etc.

Either under salaries or, preferably, the contingency allowance, provision should be made for substitute staff salaries, in case of illness or absence.

b. RENT

This varies widely from group to group. Size and number of rooms, length of time occupied, outdoor facilities and the amount of janitorial service included are factors which influence the charge. A wide variety of facilities are used: church halls or rooms, parks and recreation facilities, apartments, houses, vacant schoolrooms, college residence quarters, etc.

c. EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

Initial equipment might be obtained by requesting donations, purchasing second hand from another group, fund-raising projects, or loan. Plan carefully how you will invest in the early stages.

Provide basic, sturdy equipment of the widest variety in use: eg. floor blocks, sand and water (indoors or out), climbing apparatus, books, record player.

Check with other local co-ops, and through the yellow pages, for suppliers' names; "shop around" for sources of supplies at reduced rates for bulk buying or educational discounts on items such as paper and paint, juice and cookies, clay. Equipment expenses vary from year to year depending on the amount and type used (indoor and outdoor) and the rate of detoriation (number of children using it). A regular assessment of the school's equipment should be made with the teacher to maintain a variety of equipment that is also in good repair. Large pieces (slide, jungle gym, filmstrip projector, record player, etc.) must be budgeted for and possibly "amortized" over several years, or a "money-raiser" planned. Long-range planning is needed in which consecutive groups of parents undertake some responsibility.

d. INSURANCE

Due to the differing conditions under which cooperate groups operate, you may wish to attend to your own insurance needs. Some Councils offer group insurance. PCPI offers to its members a low cost accident policy.*

Types of insurance usually considered by schools cover:

- possible damage to the rented property (Tenant's Liability);
- possible damage to the equipment owned by the school (Owner's Liability);
- accidents to children while under the school's care (School Liability)
- injury to the teacher and assisting parent while on duty (Employer's Liability);
- accidents in transit to and from the school (Non-owned Automobile Insurance).

e. MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES

All these items should be included in the budget.

Publicity: cost of newspaper advertising for teachers and pupils - brochures printed to introduce the school - purchase of movie film or slides of program activities (these two items might be special projects, not done annually).

Postage: for correspondence and newsletter.

Paper and stencils: for correspondence, newsletter, notices, printing constitution, etc.

Affiliation fees: for the local Council of Cooperative Pre-Schools and Parent Cooperative Preschools International (PCPI)**

Incorporation fee: filed annually by incorporated schools.

* for information write: Mr. H. Hoover, Dearborn State Corporation, 921 Howard Street, Dearborn, Michigan. 48124

** request our information packet.

Books: for the parent bookshelf, pamphlets, etc.

Program: guest speakers' fees, transportation, rental of films, projector, etc.

Social: tea, coffee, etc. for parent meetings, childrens parties, etc.

Field trips: sometimes part of the budget, sometimes assessed from the children as they go.

f. CONTINGENCY ALLOWANCE

At the beginning of the year, when the budget is formulated, this allowance is made for unexpected expenses at approximately 10% of the total budget. It is not meant to cover capital improvement of equipment, which should be planned and allowed for annually under the equipment item. An unused portion of the contingency fund can be added to the accumulated reserve at the end of the year or spent on some long-range improvement, provided that the cash on hand is adequate for the incoming group.

Organization

THE EXECUTIVE

A group of people usually known as "the executive" is elected by the parents to manage the business operation of the school, which leaves the teaching staff free to concentrate on the educational philosophy and program. The executive serves the parents and teachers by carrying out the administrative duties in accordance with the purpose and by-laws of the group.

A regular schedule of executive meetings facilitates the operation of the school and promotes a business-like attitude on the part of the executive members. Executive meetings should include teachers, although exceptions may occur when discussion relates to staff.

The many duties are allotted to officers and a wide variety of committees according to the needs of the nursery. Every family, father and/or mother should have a place on the executive or a committee. Often these include:

- Executive Officers: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, who conduct the business as approved by the Board.
- Advisors: Experienced co-op people, and consultants from the community.
- Membership Committee: maintains enrolment and helps plan orientation

of new members, arranges admission with teachers approval, obtains the required health certificates, and keeps a "waiting list".

- Personnel Committee: Undertake hiring, staff development, liaison with staff, contracts and salaries, etc.
- Parent Program Committee: plans with the teacher for orientation, parent participation, parent programs, observation, school library, etc.
- Duty Roster Committee: schedules the classroom participation of parents or volunteers and arranges substitutes of emergency staff.
- Education Committee: evaluates the school's program and relates it to community educational set-up, and current ideas in the educational field.
- Co-op Council Representative: attends area Council meetings and acts as a communications contact between her school and other co-ops.
- Transportation Committee: arranges the transportation as needed (as taxis, or car pools, or buses for field trips, etc.)
- Equipment and Supplies Committee: orders and provides these as required by the teacher and with approval of the Board; sees to repairs and maintenance of the building, furnishings, and equipment.
- Housekeeping Committee: arranges for cleaning of building and periodic cleaning of toys and furnishings; one member may be the liason person with the building owner.
- Finance Committee: to estimate fees, suggest policy regarding due dates, refunds, arrears, payment of salary, bills, taxes, etc. The treasurer will be a member of this committee.
- Social Committee: to provide hospitality for parent meetings, open house, or children's parties.
- Fund Raising Committee: carries through plans to increase group's income.
- Publicity Committee: Plans the many ways in which a co-op can present itself in the community through all news media (Newspapers, radio, and T.V.) Open house, films of the school activities, posters and bulletin board displays for nursery education week, an attractive brochure etc., school newsletter circulated to community parents and associated organizations, school principals, P.T.A. president, etc.
- Nominating Committee: proposes a slate of officers for election at the annual meeting.
- Other Committees: as needed by the individual group.

One of the most serious threats to maintaining a good parent co-operative is the change in the parent body and the executive each year; good continuity is the responsibility of each ensuing executive.

Continuity

Here are some tips on how to keep your group flourishing:

- Have a good statement of purpose and by-laws as the basis for continuing operation. Maintain complete records of past operation, minutes, history, log book, with pictures and reports.

- Through adequate salary and loyal support, retain a qualified staff, whose strength and ability can become the core of a healthy school.

- Use an advisory committee, whose members serve for more than one year and view the program with long-range goals in mind.

- Introduce some executive members in the year prior to their year as parents in the group or in the first of two successive years as parents in a group.

- Hold Annual meetings early enough to allow for one or more joint meetings of the old and new executives. Require written annual reports from each officer and committee chairman to be passed on to the corresponding person in the incoming group.

- Encourage an active membership chairman supported by an on-going campaign for good public relations.

- Maintain membership in the local and/or regional Councils of Parent Cooperatives and PCPI. Through their services (discussions, publications, workshops and conferences) work towards the best possible standards for operation, staff and program. These Councils are a medium for the continuing enlightenment of the people who serve the groups.

Part II has been adapted from (1) the "Handbook for Cooperative Schools" Quebec Council of Parent Participation Preschools

(2) "What is a Cooperative Nursery?" Leaflet of the Day Nurseries Branch, Dept. of Social and Family Services, Ontario.

THERE MAY BE A LOCAL COUNCIL IN YOUR AREA. CONSULT A PCPI DIRECTORY FOR THE CURRENT ADDRESS.

Northeast District	Cooperative Preschool Council of Northern New Jersey Quebec Council of Parent Participation Preschools Rochester Area Coordinator Mrs. F.C. Tatem (1971) Rockland County Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools
Southeast District	Baltimore Council of Parent Cooperatives Maryland Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools, Inc. Northern Virginia Federation of Cooperative Schools
Midwest District	Central Michigan Council of Cooperative Nurseries Flint Area Parent-Child Nurseries Inc. Greater Detroit Cooperative Nursery Council Hamilton and District Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools Indianapolis Council of Parent Cooperatives Kansas City Cooperative Preschool Council Michigan Council of Cooperative Nurseries Ottawa Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools Parent Participation Preschools Metro Toronto Shoreline Cooperative Preschool Council PCPI Area Representative Wisconsin
Southwest District	California Council of Parent Participation Preschools East Bay Council of Parent Participation Preschools Long Beach Council of Parent Nursery Schools Los Angeles Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools Orange City Council Parent Participation Nursery Schools Peninsula Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools San Fernando Valley Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools
Northwest District	Parent Cooperative Preschools of Oregon Tacoma-Pierce County Council of Cooperative Preschools Vancouver Association of Cooperative Preschool Groups Vancouver Island Cooperative Preschool Association

MEMBERSHIP IN PARENT COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL HELPS TO:

* promote interchange of information among parent cooperative nurseries, kindergartens and day care centers
* promote community appreciation of the increasing need for parent and preschool education
* encourage continuing education for teachers and parents
* promote desirable standards for the programs, practices and conditions in parent cooperative groups
* study legislation designed to further the health and well being of children and families
* cooperate with family living, adult education, and early childhood organizations in the interest of more effective service relationships with parents of young children